LESSON 2: LEADERSHIP RESHUFFLED

approach
behavior
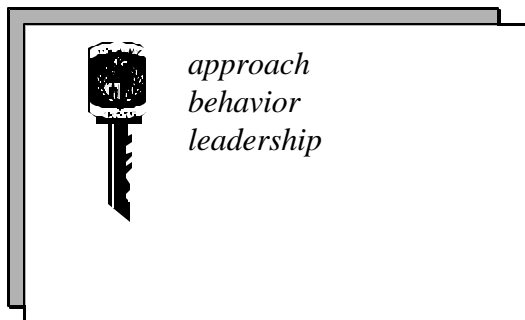*leadership*

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, there has been a great interest in determining what makes a good leader. In fact, we can trace studies back as far as the end of the nineteenth century during the industrial revolution. As a result, **leadership** studies have been categorized into three general eras:

1. Traits – 1800s to 1940s

2. **Behaviors** – 1940s to 1970s

3. Contingency – 1960s to present

TRAITS APPROACH

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it was believed that leaders were born. It was a man's heritage that provided this innate ability to lead. One was born with special characteristics or traits to enable him to lead others effectively.

In order to prove this philosophy, spanning some 40 years, researchers studied existing political, industrial, and religious leaders. They expected to find that these leaders would possess certain characteristics that would distinguish them from their followers.

The researchers were unable to provide evidence to support their belief that leaders are born. Their findings identified a number of traits that were common to those in leadership positions. Traits such as intelligence, dependability, sociability, aggressiveness, originality, popularity, and humor. However, they also found different situations required the use of different traits. Others concluded there was no evidence to support that just having those traits would help one become a leader, much less an effective leader.
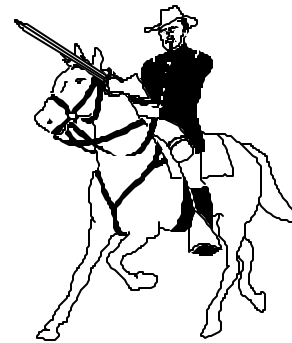
These inconsistent findings led others to continue the search for predictions and understanding of how effective leaders lead. There was an accepted belief that a combination of traits was one element of the equation. However, personality alone was not proven to be the only or even the dominant factor in leading others.

BEHAVIOR APPROACH

At the advent of World War II, researchers began to expand their search for the source of leader effectiveness. They began to look at and categorize the "behaviors" of effective leaders. They felt this was a more positive research **approach** because behaviors can be observed much more objectively, they can be measured more precisely, and they can be taught.

A researcher by the name of Kurt Lewin (1938) provided the foundation for the behavior approach of leadership. He identified

a continuum of leadership behaviors that included the:

- Democratic style of consulting with their followers and allowing them to participate in decision-making.

- Autocratic style of making the decisions alone.

- Laissez-faire style of providing no direction at all.

Although very different behaviors were identified, there was no evidence as to which style was most effective and which style to use in what situation. Additionally, each style created different reactions from different followers. Therefore, the researchers could not clearly articulate the BEST way to lead effectively.

The Ohio State Leadership Studies continued the search for leader behaviors. Almost 2,000 behaviors were identified and subsequently reduced to a more manageable number. However, two primary leadership behaviors stood out among the many: relationship and structure.

Relationship behaviors dealt with the concern for people and included behaviors such as treating team members as equals, being friendly and approachable, making work pleasant, listening to other's ideas, and looking out for the personal well-being of others.

Structure behaviors dealt with the concern for task and included such behaviors as setting and communicating expectations, establishing work schedules, sharing work procedures, and making work assignments.

There was some evidence coming forth that people-oriented leaders were linked with follower satisfaction levels and that effective leadership required both task and relationship behaviors. However, a few questions remained. Does effective leadership come from just the traits and behaviors of the leader? How are traits and behaviors influenced by the type of task and the type of work group?

CONTINGENCY APPROACH

Even though there was the desire to include situational factors in leadership effectiveness studies, this inclusion did not happen until the 1960s. This approach assumes that the effectiveness of the leader's personality, style and behavior is contingent upon the require-ments of the situation and further supports the belief that:

- There is no one best way to lead.

- The situational factors will determine the most effective style and behaviors.

- You can teach leadership behaviors.

- The leader does have an impact on group or organization effectiveness.

- Leadership effectiveness is affected by the interaction between situational factors and personal characteristics.

Modern approaches to leadership effective-ness have a somewhat integrated view of Traits, Behavioral, and Contingency Approaches. Historically, researchers have studied leader behaviors by observing execu-tives in a variety of organizations. However, if we agree with the definition of leadership as "the ability to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direc-tion and motivation," then should we not be looking at the behaviors of anyone who influ-ences others? Are we not ALL leaders in our families, schools, communities, and life?

As a result of these historical perspectives, several approaches to "leadership style" have been identified. Those most common are the "trait approach," the "situational approach,"

the "follower approach" and the "contingency model."

1. The trait approach maintains that a person either does or does not possess the specific traits that are considered to be the essentials of leadership.

2. The situational approach assumes that certain situations call for specific types of leadership behaviors and that leaders will be those who best fit the requirements of the situation.

3. The follower approach holds that the needs of group members determine who will lead. Leadership, then, is a coincidence between the needs of the group and the abilities a person happens to have.

4. The contingency model maintains that personal styles and situational characteristics combine to determine leadership. A proper match between styles and situations is essential.

What does all this mean to you? To answer that let us return to the definition leadership.

Leadership is the ability (or process) to influence, lead, or guide others so as to accomplish a mission in the manner desired by providing purpose, direction, and motivation.

There have been studies over a number of years directed at gaining more understanding about effective leadership. The desire to assist people in the behaviors that effectively influence, lead, and guide others remains a highly regarded search. The more you understand the behaviors that create the desire to follow, the more you will be able to determine the leadership behaviors that will work best for you. And even more important, the ones that do not.

Have you ever wondered how some leaders influence, excite, stimulate, energize others? When you were influenced, excited, stimu-lated, or energized by someone else to do something you thought impossible, did you reflect on those times so you could copy the behaviors you liked? Think of those teachers you remember most. What was it they did that made you remember them?
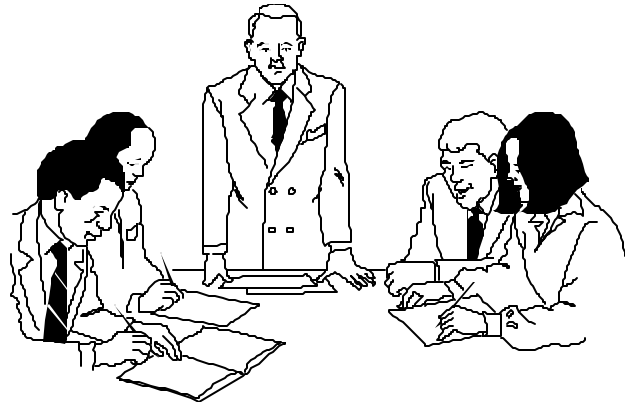
As researchers continue to study the characteristics of leaders and as the world we live in continues to change through technology and human growth, we are finding that one key ingredient to leading others successfully, is the ability to successfully lead oneself. Leading from the inside out is the foundation to building successful relationships in your family, church, community, and school. Your relationships with others are the foundation of trust! Trust is the foundation to empowerment and alignment of the mission you are leading others to accomplish.

In the next lesson, we will look at leading from the inside out through values, ethics, character, and attributes.

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